

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520-0099

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

We write today to bring an issue of bipartisan concern to your attention. For more than three decades, the Palestinian Authority has provided monetary awards and other incentives to those who have committed acts of terrorism in the region. We fear that this financial support encourages violence and serves as a clear impediment to a truly durable peace. As such, we encourage you to address this issue when Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas visits Washington in early May.

Since the early 1990's, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has provided financial compensation and employment benefits to Palestinians who have committed acts of terrorism. In 2016, programs providing compensation to terrorists and their families were funded at approximately \$300 million. These payments are officially sanctioned by the PA and create a perverse and troubling incentive for individual acts of terrorism. For example, under current PA law, a Palestinian who was convicted of an act of terror and given a 10-year sentence would receive \$130,000 over ten years. In addition to such compensation, individuals who are incarcerated also receive a guarantee of employment following their release from prison, creating yet another incentive for terrorism.

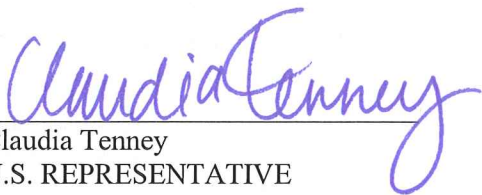
Policies which have the potential to encourage violence in the region are simply unacceptable and given that American citizens have died in previous acts of terrorism, this is an issue of grave concern to us. For example, on November 19, 2015, 18-year old Ezra Schwartz, an American boy from Sharon, Massachusetts, was murdered by a Palestinian in an attack that left him and two others dead. The individual charged with his murder was sentenced to four life sentences, making him eligible to receive \$3,000 a month. Sadly, since payments are based on the length of individual sentences, convicted terrorists receive more money for acts of terrorism that are even more brutal.


The United States is the largest provider of aid to Palestinians. This aid serves a variety of purposes, including to help meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people. Since 2015, members of Congress have come together on a bipartisan basis in an attempt to use this aid as leverage to deter the PA from providing such payments to terrorists and their families. In each year since 2015, annual appropriations have provided for a 1-to-1 reduction in U.S. aid for every dollar that the PA provides to terrorists. It is clear, however, that this troubling policy continues and that this change alone in current law has not been sufficient to deter the continuation of the PA's program.

As a result, we strongly urge you to ensure that this issue is raised with President Mahmoud Abbas during his upcoming visit to the White House and to continue using all other means at your disposal to address the PA's reluctance to abandon this program altogether. As members of Congress, we are committed to the long-standing policy of the United States to see a durable peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, resulting in two states; a Jewish, democratic state living in peace and security next to a peaceful Palestinian state. So long as the PA continues to compensate and thereby incentivize terrorist activity, we find it difficult to see how the necessary conditions for a lasting peace can be established.

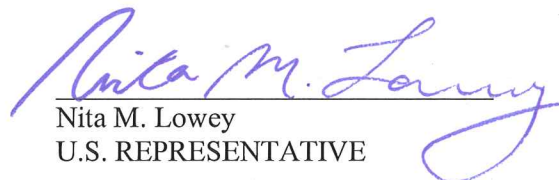
We thank you for your consideration of this important issue and stand ready to assist you in bringing about a sustainable resolution to our concerns.

Sincerely,




Claudia Tenney
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

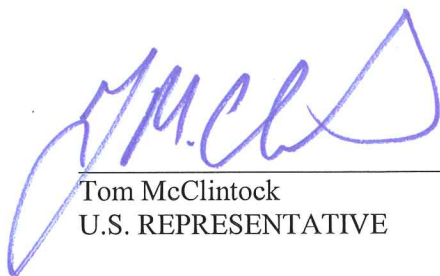
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Peter J. Roskam
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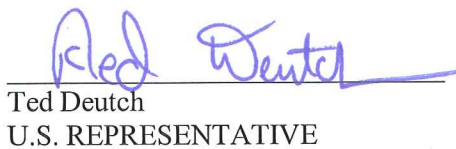
Nita M. Lowey
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Trent Franks
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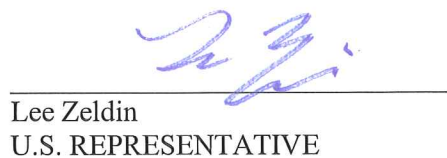
Bradley S. Schneider
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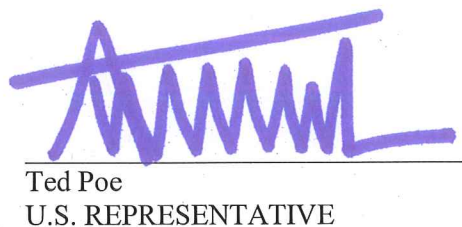
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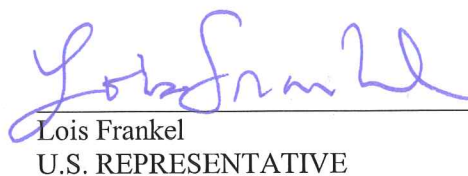
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Grace Meng
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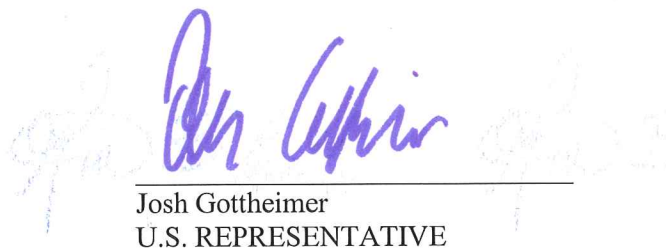
Ted Poe
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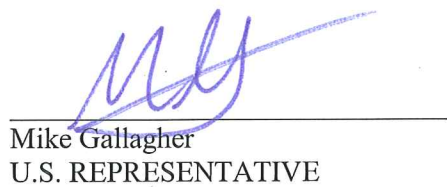
Lois Frankel
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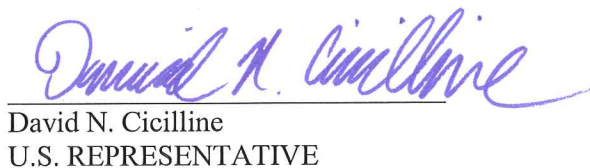
Mia Love
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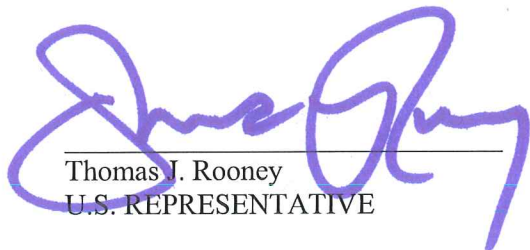
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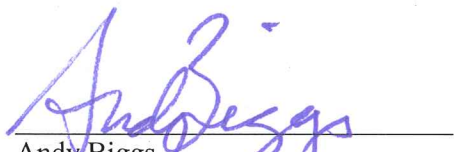
Gus M. Bilirakis
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Patrick Meehan
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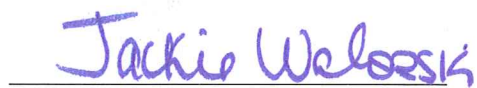
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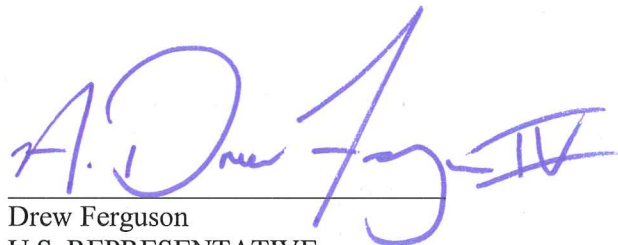
Andy Biggs
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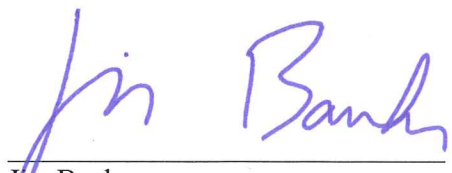
Ryan Costello
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Jackie Walorski
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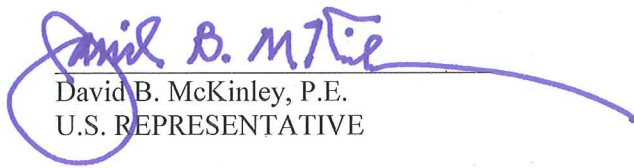
Drew Ferguson
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Jim Banks
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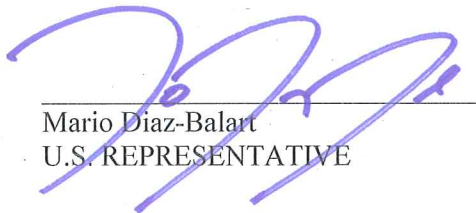
Jack Bergman
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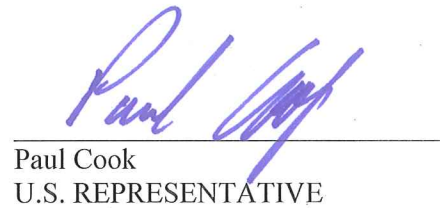
David B. McKinley, P.E.
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Randy Weber
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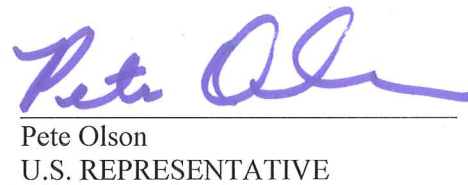
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